Emergency Haying and Grazing on DNR-Managed Land

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Weather can be challenging. Occasionally, flooding, drought or storms create widespread conditions that lead to the governor proclaiming a disaster. The governor can also request a Presidential Disaster Declaration.

In times like these, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources opens up state land to haying and grazing to help livestock farmers hit by severe weather.

The DNR manages 463 public wildlife areas, although some counties do not have state-managed wildlife areas. In addition, some limited areas in Iowa's state forests and parks are open to haying and grazing.

Carefully monitored grazing can revitalize prairie plantings and successfully improve wildlife habitat — a win-win solution for livestock producers and Iowa's grassland species.

Haying

For many producers, haying is the best option. It works particularly well for livestock farmers on alfalfa or clover plantings where the plants attract insects and provide green browse for wildlife. In other areas, firebreaks planted to legumes may be good places to hay.

Other areas where haying works well are on wildlife management areas where new prairie plantings are becoming established. Mowing helps control annual weeds and encourage growth of native plants. Finally, haying can occur on native prairie that includes a mix of warm season grasses and wildflowers.

Steep slopes and the need to supply fencing may make haying a preferred option on many public lands.

Grazing

Grazing requires more effort from the livestock producer who must provide temporary fencing and water for the livestock. Since Iowa's wildlife areas, forests and parks are generally located in unusual areas, steep topography can make access to the area challenging. Livestock

Continued on back

2013 Areas Open to Haying or Grazing

The DNR manages State Parks, State Forests and Wildlife Management Areas. Portions of these public lands are open to emergency haying and grazing in 2013, starting after July 15, when most upland birds have nested.

Three Presidential Disaster Declarations were issued in 2013 due to severe storms, tornadoes, flooding, straight-line winds and a severe winter storm.

Since 1990, 33 presidentially declared disasters have occured in Iowa. Look under Disasters at www. iowahomeland security.org/ for more information

Most state lands do not have fencing or readily available sources of water. Providing water, fencing and insurance is up to the livestock producer when grazing state lands on an emergency basis.

Requirements

- All producers must own livestock
- Producers are responsible for fencing and water
- All haying and grazing leases must meet the management objectives for the area, e.g., on a wildlife management area, the objective is to improve wildlife habitat, sometimes for a specific species.
- Grazing and haying can occur after July 15.

grazing and patch-burn grazing producers must agree to follow a set stocking density per acre and graze only for the time specified in the lease. They must also carry liability insurance and maintain the fencing.

Benefits

Haying and grazing can be a win-win solution for livestock producers and wildlife. Grazing is an effective management tool to improve native grasslands for upland game and other grassland birds. Flash grazing and patch-burn grazing can increase the plant dican increase the plant diversity, and mix of short and tall plants, benefitting the livestock, and the greater prairie chicken and other birds. Haying helps establish new native plantings, develop loafing areas for geese, and discourages invasive species like trees and brush.

Find out more about emergency haying and grazing from your wildlife biologist or forester.

Or learn more about Iowa's wildlife management areas.

Contact a private lands biologist or forester for assistance in adding wildlife benefits to your farming operation.

Signing Up

- Call 515-281-5918 at the central office in Des Moines to contact the DNR. The operator will ask you about your operation and the county or public area you are interested in, and then match you up with a DNR land manager. Or contact a DNR wildlife land manager directly.
- The DNR land manager will contact you to discuss potential areas and set up a field visit.
- Enter into a habitat lease agreement with the DNR, which will outline the conditions you need to follow.
- If signing a lease after Aug. 1, you must also sign and date an Ag Lease Termination Notice, which clarifies that the lease agreement is for this year only.

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